

2007 Session Report to the 34th District

Rep. Eileen Cody • Rep. Joe McDermott



**Rep. Eileen
Cody**



**Rep. Joe
McDermott**



August 2007

Dear neighbors,

During the 2007 session of the Legislature, we focused on kitchen-table issues that every family deals with: education, jobs and health care.

As one of us is chair of Health Care and the other is the Democratic Lead on Education, we had major roles this session in moving our state forward on these top priorities.

We are happy to report that this session was a success:

- The House and Senate passed landmark reforms on health care;
- We made historic investments in education;
- Our construction budgets will create thousands of good jobs building new schools, universities and highways; and
- We broke the deadlock on ferries, paving the way to build the new boats we need.

We want to thank all of you who took the time to call, write or e-mail this session in support of reforms. Your collaboration – and your family stories – were very helpful in getting legislation passed.

There isn't enough room in this newsletter to talk about every issue; we only have space for highlights. If you have a question about specific legislation or budget items, please contact us.

Thank you again for the privilege of serving as your representatives. It is an honor.

Sincerely yours,

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Committees & Leadership:

- Health Care and Wellness, *Chair*
- Appropriations

Committees & Leadership:

- Caucus Education Policy Leader
- Appropriations
- Appropriations Subcommittee on Education
- Education
- State Government and Tribal Affairs

Representative Eileen Cody

Health care

This was a great session for health care.

As chair of Health Care and Wellness, I've been working hard on innovative reforms to give more kids and workers health coverage.

Below are some of the highlights of what we passed.

■ The Partnership - a public-private marketplace for small business

I wrote a reform ([HB 1569](#)) that uses a new idea to give more people affordable health care in Washington state.

Right now, small businesses have trouble with health care because they don't have the buying power that big businesses use to get a good deal for their workers.

The highest number of uninsured people are 19 to 35-year-olds who work for small businesses. These are the prime years for having children, and if mom and dad don't have coverage through their job, chances are their children don't have health coverage, either.

I believe it's our duty to fix this so people with jobs that don't offer health coverage – or those unlucky enough to come down with cancer – don't have to hold fundraisers to pay their medical bills.

To help fix this problem, I worked across the aisle with Bill Hinkle (R-Cle Elum) on a completely different way of looking at health insurance. It borrows ideas from the left and right to get the job done.



The Washington Health Insurance Partnership is a marketplace where workers at small businesses can buy a variety of health plans, instead of a small business trying to buy a single plan that fits both the owner of the company and the lowest-paid worker.

This reform also pools all the various funds – from the business, the worker and government health

funds – to make health care more available and affordable.

In the Partnership:

- Businesses determine how much they want to contribute toward health insurance for their employees.
- Workers will be able to choose the health plan that's right for them. They will be able to keep their health plan if they lose or leave their job.
- Seasonal workers can use money from multiple employers to get steady health care without any of today's hassles.
- Low-wage workers get help paying their share of the premium for their health plan.

■ Small business owners

If you own a small business and are interested in the issue of health care, please contact me. I'm quite interested in the challenges and opportunities we have in this area. You can reach me by phone, mail or e-mail.

■ Cheaper prescription drugs

In 2006, Washington and Oregon formed the first multi-state team to give citizens cheaper prescription drugs. We did it by pooling our two

states' purchasing power on behalf of citizens struggling to pay for the medicines they need to stay healthy and alive.

Now, more than a dozen states offer prescription drug cards. According to the AARP, no state offers better discounts than the Washington-Oregon card.

More than 50,000 Washington residents have already signed up for the Prescription Drug Discount Card, a free card that allows anyone to save up to 60 percent on generic drugs and 20 percent on brand-name drugs at hundreds of participating pharmacies around the state.

The WPDP card is available to any Washington resident regardless of age or income. You can enroll online at www.rx.wa.gov or by calling 1-800-913-4146.

■ Blue Ribbon Commission

We won't get a handle on health care costs until we improve our health care system. This reform (SB 5930/HB 2098) tackles costs and quality over the next five years through several activities.

It builds prevention into our system so we can prevent chronic, costly illnesses like diabetes and heart disease. It cuts red tape by moving toward electronic medical records.

This reform also strengthens our public health system to make sure our food is safe, our water is clean and we can respond to an epidemic.

■ Hospital infection reporting

Every year, two million patients get infected at the hospital or clinic – and about 90,000 die from those infections. It's a huge problem that people don't talk about.

And it's a problem we can prevent.

Right now, 15 states require hospitals to report information about infections. Washington became the sixteenth state now that we've passed House Bill 1106.

Now, hospitals must collect and report data about these infections. Beginning in 2009, the state Department of Health will publish an annual report on its website that compares hospitals' infection rates. In 2011, we'll look at adding other facilities aside from hospitals.

This is a good idea that should prevent infections and save lives.

I'm happy to report that Gov. Gregoire signed into law my health care reform (House Bill 1569) to give more affordable health coverage to workers across Washington state.



2007 Session Report

34th LEGISLATIVE
DISTRICT

Representative Joe McDermott

■ Redefining Education

Public education is a core value of our democracy. Our students deserve a meaningful diploma that prepares them for life, citizenship, and work. We are working to ensure these values are achieved and that every student has the skills they need in life, whether they are entering the workforce, attending vocational or technical programs, or enrolling in a two or four year college.



This session we really focused on improving education by approaching the system as a whole, from early learning all the way to college.

To improve education, we developed a Five-Point Plan to give our kids a better chance to get the education they need to succeed in school, at work and in life.

I'm proud to say that one of the great victories of this session was getting money in the state budget for 9,700 more slots in our universities and colleges. That's almost 10,000 more people in our state who'll have the chance to earn a college degree, the surest ticket to the American Dream.

The 5-Point Plan for Education:

1. Start early by investing in quality pre-school programs and phasing in all-day kindergarten.
2. Fully fund basic education.
3. Put an outstanding teacher in every classroom.
4. Help every student succeed and graduate on time.
5. Make post-high school education a real option for everyone.

For more information about our education plan, please visit: http://housedemocrats.wa.gov/issues/education/2007_education_5point-plan.asp

■ Want smart kids? Try full tummies

It's a fact that hungry children can't focus on learning. Last session we eliminated the school breakfast co-pay for all low income students and this year we increased participation in the National School Lunch Program by eliminating the co-pay some low-income families must pay for school lunch.

The 2007-09 budget includes \$3.3 million to eliminate the co-pay for low-income students from kindergarten through third grade, plus \$1.5 million to make school breakfast more affordable to all students, regardless of income.



Rep. Joe McDermott introduces Gov. Chris Gregoire at the Domestic Partnership Registry bill signing ceremony in Olympia, WA.



■ Domestic Partnerships: first step toward full equality

Couples in committed relationships care for one another regardless of their sexual orientation. They live intimately together, purchase property together, form life goals together and grow old together.

Can you imagine what it would be like if doctors kept you in the dark about the condition of a spouse hit by a car? Or being unable to visit

your partner in intensive care? Or how about not being allowed to grant permission for life-saving surgery on a comatose partner?

This session we passed a bill so that gay and lesbian couples aren't put through this kind of nightmare in our state. Just 14 months after signing a bill adding sexual orientation to the state's anti-discrimination statute, Governor Gregoire once again addressed a large crowd of equal-rights supporters as



Jane Abbott Lighty and Pete-e Petersen

Photo by Anil Kapahi.
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she signed into law the Domestic Partnership Registry bill, which will provide same-sex couples and unmarried heterosexual couples over age 62 a few basic rights including:

- The right to visit one's partner in the hospital;
- The right to provide informed consent for a partner who is not competent;
- The right to inherit a partner's property without a will; and
- The right to make funeral arrangements.

This is the first step in the process of securing legal protections for Washington's gay and lesbian families.

Ferries

Our district relies on dependable, affordable ferry service. This session, we made progress on a number of fronts, including a breakthrough on building new ferries.

■ Building new boats

Washington state relies on ferries almost more than any other state in the union. We call them maritime highways, and we believe they are just as important as our interstates and state highways.

We need new boats. Yet for years, there's been gridlock on the issue of building new ferry boats.

We're happy to report that House Bill 2378 fixes that gridlock and moves us toward the new boats that we need. We passed this bill out of the House and Senate and Gov. Chris Gregoire signed it into law.

■ Freezing fares and other changes

The ferry system is about to undergo major changes in how it serves riders and pays for expansions in service. The transportation budget we passed, along with a reform law (House bill 2358), gets many of these changes underway.

They include:

- a 2.5 year freeze in ferry fares, which took effect May 1, 2007;
- a two-year pause in terminal improvement projects; and
- new pricing policies and operating strategies.

Passenger-only ferries will remain under state control until July 1, 2008, which the Vashon-Seattle run will be taken over by the King County ferry district. House Bill 2358 also exempts passenger-only ferries from the state sales tax, which will help make the service more affordable.

Protecting the environment

This session, we did important work for our environment.

We doubled state spending to buy land for parks and to protect wild lands, with \$100 million in state funds dedicated to that task.

We also worked hard on cleaning up Puget Sound, with a new committee specifically created to focus on that task.



■ Protecting Maury Island: the battle isn't over

We are extremely disappointed that a bill that would have marked a major step toward protecting the Sound from serious damage did not pass. With only a few hours left before an important cutoff, the Maury Island bill was loaded with more than 60 amendments, effectively killing it.

The bill would have created the Maury Island Aquatic Reserve to protect wildlife and a sole-source aquifer that supplies water to island residents.

This is not the first time multinational corporations have found ways to protect environmental deregulators and polluters at the expense of the citizens of Maury and Vashon Islands and everyone who cares about Puget Sound.

But make no mistake: this battle is not over. We will continue fighting to protect the wildlife around Maury Island and the residents who live there.

Local construction projects

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White Center Emergency Food Association	\$184,000
Duwamish Longhouse	\$275,000
Senior Center of West Seattle	\$500,000
West Seattle Food Bank, Community Resource Center	\$400,000
Neighborhood House, High Point Neighborhood Center	\$2,000,000
Seattle Chinese Garden	\$500,000
Arts West Playhouse and Gallery	\$150,000
Library Connection at Greenbridge	\$200,000
White Center Heights Park	\$500,000
Seahurst Park Renovation	\$500,000
Longfellow Creek Greenspace Expansion	\$300,000
Seahurst Park bulkhead phase II	\$1,100,000
South Seattle Community College (Facility Preservation)	\$742,010
South Seattle Community College (Roof Repairs)	\$331,490
South Seattle Community College (Infrastructure)	\$31,500
South Seattle Community College (Minor Works Program)	\$624,400
South Seattle Community College (Minor Works Preservation)	\$353,400
Total 34th Legislative District	\$8,691,800

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